

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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FOR LUERS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, MX

SUBJECT: REP. CHARLES B. RANGEL HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE

1. RANGEL PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCT 29 FEATURED RELEASE OF PRESS STATEMENT AND LETTER HE WROTE PRESIDENT FORD. TEXT OF PRESS RELEASE AND DEPARTMENT PRESS GUIDANCE FOLLOWS:

2. PRESS RELEASE: QUOTE: NEW MEXICAN HEROIN CROP WILL SURMOUNT PREVIOUS ESTIMATES. CONGRESSMAN CHARLES B. RANGEL (D-N.Y.) HAS WRITTEN PRESIDENT FORD URGING QUOTE IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION UNQUOTE BY THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO PREVENT QUOTE A BUMPER CROP OF MEXICAN HEROIN FROM CROSSING OUR BORDER IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS UNQUOTE.

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RANGEL HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

OF OPIUM POPPY PRODUCTION IN THE SIERRA MADRE REGION OF SOUTHWESTERN MEXICO. THE HARLEM CONGRESSMAN WENT TO MEXICO TO EXAMINE LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AGAINST THE DIVERSION OF OPIUM IN RESPONSE TO RECENT EVIDENCE RELEASED BY THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION THAT DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THIS YEAR 90 PERCENT OF THE HEROIN CONFISCATED IN 13 U.S. CITIES WAS OF MEXICAN ORIGIN.

WITHIN MEXICO RANGEL WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MEXICAN OFFICIALS AND AGENTS OF THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (DEA) AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

IN HIS LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT, RANGEL POINTED OUT, QUOTE ALL PARTIES PRESENT -- ESPECIALLY THE MEXICAN AUTHORITIES -- WERE SHOCKED AT THE UNEXPECTED AND PREVIOUSLY UNREPORTED VAST EXPANSE OF THE POPPY FIELDS UNQUOTE. DEA OFFICIALS' EARLIER ESTIMATES OF 10 TONS OF OPIUM BEING PRODUCED IN MEXICO CLEARLY HAVE TO BE REVISED UPWARD IN VIEW OF THIS EARLY CROP NOW BEING PROCESSED THREE MONTHS AHEAD OF TIME.

QUOTE POPPIES WERE GROWING EVERYWHERE UNQUOTE RANGEL REPORTED, QUOTE THROUGHOUT THE MOUNTAIN RANGES, IN THE VALLEYS, ON THE TOPS AND EVEN ON THE VERTICAL SLOPES. THE ARRIVAL OF OUR HELICOPTER CAUSED FARMERS TO SCATTER AND LEAVE THEIR EQUIPMENT IN THE FIELDS WHERE THEY WERE WORKING THE CROPS, GATHERING THE OPIUM GUM. UNQUOTE. RANGEL CHARGED THAT THE PRESENT MEXICAN SYSTEM OF SENDING IN FOOT SOLDIERS TO DESTROY THE POPPIES WITH STICKS IS QUOTE DOOMED TO FAILURE UNQUOTE AND CAN MAKE QUOTE ONLY AN INSIGNIFICANT DENT IN THE TOTAL OPIUM PRODUCED UNQUOTE. HE URGED PRESIDENT FORD TO MEET IMMEDIATELY WITH THE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO TO PLAN A MORE EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO THIS CRISIS.

3. FOLLOWING IS GUIDANCE IF YOU ARE QUERIED RE PRESS RELEASES OR STATEMENTS BY SENATOR PERCY OR REP. RANGEL.

Q. CONGRESSMAN RANGEL HAS SAID THAT THE FORTHCOMING MEXICAN HEROIN CROP WILL EXCEED ESTIMATES. IS THIS TRUE?

A. THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO DESTROYING UNCLASSIFIED

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OPIUM POPPY IN THE FIELDS BEFORE IT IS HARVESTED AND IS GEARING UP RIGHT NOW TO INITIATE A MAJOR ERADICATION CAMPAIGN INVOLVING THOUSANDS OF TROOPS AND HUNDREDS OF FEDERAL POLICE. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WITH INTENSE EFFORT THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT WILL SUCCEED IN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF OPIUM THAT IS AVAILABLE FOR PROCESSING INTO HEROIN.

Q. IF U.S. AND MEXICAN AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE OF MEXICAN OPIUM PRODUCTION CHARACTERISTICS, WHY WERE OFFICIALS SHOCKED BY THE FACT THAT POPPIES ARE GROWING RIGHT NOW IN THE AREAS OF MEXICO VISITED BY CONGRESSMAN RANGEL?

A. WE BELIEVE THAT THE FACT THAT POPPY IS BEING PLANTED EARLIER AND ON STEEPER SLOPES THAN HAS BEEN CUSTOMARY IN THE PAST IS A REACTION BY THE TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS TO THE PRESSURE OF THE ERADICATION CAMPAIGN LAST SPRING, WHICH COMMENCED IN JANUARY. EVIDENTLY THEY HOPE TO HARVEST BEFORE THE POPPY IS DESTROYED BY ADVANCING THE GROWING SEASON. HOWEVER, THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO ADVANCED THE DESTRUCTION CAMPAIGN, WHICH WILL COMMENCE IN A FEW DAYS. THE MOVE BY CULTIVATORS TO HIGHER SLOPES IS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE PRESSURE OF CROP DESTRUCTION. WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THIS IS AN INDICATION OF THE SUCCESS OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION PROGRAM.

Q. IS KNOCKING DOWN POPPIES WITH STICKS CONSIDERED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ERADICATION MEASURE?

A. THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT HAS USED THIS METHOD FOR YEARS. THE PRINCIPAL LIMITATIONS ARE THAT IT REQUIRES LARGE MANPOWER RESOURCES, WHICH ARE NOW PROVIDED BY THE MEXICAN ARMY. IN RECENT YEARS THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO HAS EXPANDED THE NUMBER OF TROOPS DEPLOYED IN NARCOTICS DESTRUCTION AND EMPLOYED HELICOPTERS FOR TRANSPORTING TROOPS TO THE MOST INACCESSIBLE AREAS.

Q. WHAT SUPPORT HAS THE USG PROVIDED FOR CURBING HEROIN COMING FROM MEXICO?

A. IN ITS SUPPORT OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S OPIUM POPPY DESTRUCTION PROGRAM AND PROGRAM TO UNCOVER AND UNCLASSIFIED

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NEUTRALIZE TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS, THE USG HAS GRANTED EQUIPMENT COSTING APPROXIMATELY DOLS 20 MILLION IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. OVER DOLS 5 MILLION IS BUDGETED FOR FY 1976. THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION EXCHANGES INFORMATION WITH MEXICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES TO NEUTRALIZE TRAFFICKERS DEALING IN HEROIN COMING FROM MEXICO OR COCAINE TRANSITING THAT COUNTRY FROM SOUTH AMERICA.

Q. DO THE MEXICANS INTEND TO ALWAYS DESTROY OPIUM BY THE STICK METHOD, OR WILL THEY CONVERT TO TECHNOLOGICALLY MORE ADVANCED METHODS OF DESTROYING CULTIVATION, SUCH AS FLAME THROWERS OR HERBICIDES?

A. THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED WITH FLAME THROWERS AND HERBICIDES BRIEFLY IN THE 1960'S, WAS DISCOURAGED, AND

ABANDONED THOSE EXPERIMENTS. WE KNOW THAT THE MEXICAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM ARE INNOVATIVE AND ALWAYS OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AND EXPERIMENTING WITH BETTER METHODS, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW IF THEY HAVE DEFINITE PLANS TO ABANDON THE STICK METHOD FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

Q. WHAT IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT DOING IN RESPONSE TO SENATOR PERCY'S LETTER TO SEC. KISSINGER ABOUT MEXICAN DRUGS COMING INTO THE U.S.? PERCY RELEASE DISCUSSED SEPTEL.

A. DRUG TRAFFICKING BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE U.S. IS A TOP PRIORITY BILATERAL MATTER FOR BOTH COUNTRIES. WE HAVE REGULAR AND FREQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH MEXICAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS ABOUT THE NEED TO SUPPRESS NARCOTICS PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING.

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